



# THE SONLIGHT

December 2023 • Volume 32 • Issue 12

## ADVENT SCHEDULE

**Blue Christmas**

**Dec 20 - 7pm**

**Christmas Eve**

**Morning Worship**

**Taylorsville - 10:45**

**The Bridge - 11:00**

**Evening Worship**

**Family Service - 5:30**

**Communion - 6:30**

**Cantata - 7:00**

**New Year's Eve**

**Taylorsville - 10:45**

**The Bridge - 11:00**



The SonLight  
Published Monthly

Sulphur Grove UMC  
7505 Taylorsville Road  
Huber Heights, OH  
45424



**Sulphur Grove United Methodist Church**

**"Growing Disciples, Living and Sharing God's love"**



# Coffee Chat



It's hard for me to grasp that the year 2023 is almost over! Where has the time gone? In this last year we have accomplished much in mission and ministry here at Sulphur Grove. On October 1 of this year, we saw the launch of the Bridge of Hope Church at the former Brandt UMC campus. We saw the opening of Lifewise Academy which is using our Bridge of Hope facility to conduct its classes reaching out to elementary grade students in the Bethel School District. We also added Dinner at the Bridge, a "dinner church" model of worship at the Bridge as well. All this was done in line with our mission of "Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." Thanks to all who helped bring this vision into reality. Please continue to pray for the Bridge of Hope and its mission to reach people in the Brandt, Carriage Trails, and Bethel Township areas.

The hard news is that 2023 has been a difficult financial year for Sulphur Grove (SG). Throughout the winter and spring seasons, we managed to not run a deficit in giving vs. expenditures. However, since summer the deficit has steadily increased. Giving historically drops at SG during the summer months and then recovers after school starts. That recovery did not happen this year. As I write (11/15), we currently have a deficit of \$50,000 plus. We have taken steps to cut costs where we can, such as not printing bulletins, but the reality is most of our costs are "fixed." We can do little to change the costs of electricity, gas, trash disposal, or the costs of staff without layoffs.

Part of the deficit could be the nearly \$40,000 final cost of the recent roof replacement. There is a possibility that some people designated their "normal giving" to the roof versus to the budget. Also remember that about one-half of the roof replacement cost was covered by the Dybvad memorial gift. So the deficit cannot be attributed totally to the roof replacement. Another possible reason is the poor state of our U.S. economy. The compounding effects of recent high inflation rates have taken a toll on everyone. Deaths of faithful givers and retirements have also impacted the church. I can say with my wife Diane's retirement in June, we had to drop our giving to the church by 33% or \$100 per week. Sadly, we have also lost some folks over the homosexuality issue who moved to churches more in line with their beliefs on this matter. The sum of all this has led to a decrease in giving to Sulphur Grove. And just to answer any questions that might arise about management of the church funds please know this. This is not a result of mismanagement. Our overall costs this year are lower than they were in 2022.

I share this with you to make you aware that if giving continues at its current level, we will have to make some significant and unpleasant cuts in staff hours or even the elimination of staff positions. We will likely have to reduce the amount of financial support given to the several mission efforts we support. Please do not take this as a threat or attempt to force anyone into giving more money as it is not. I understand the financial strain many are feeling right now. I feel it too. I share this information only to make you aware of where we are financially and prepare you for cuts that may have to be made in the 2024 budget.

I am praying that November and December will be very good giving months that will eliminate or significantly reduce our current deficit. I invite you to join me in prayer for the finances of our beloved church. I am confident that together, with God's help, we will get through this financial famine.

Blessings and Peace in Christ Jesus,



## WATCH OR LISTEN LIVE!



Traveling this winter? Visiting family? You can still worship with your friends and neighbors at Sulphur Grove! We broadcast the 10:45am service live online every week. Simply go to [www.sulphurgrove.org/online](http://www.sulphurgrove.org/online) to watch, or if you have a slower internet connection, you can listen to our audio-only broadcast.



## Meditation from my heart...



Tonight was Dinner at the Bridge. What a great evening! Our numbers are growing with a few new people each week. Tonight, there were 16, plus my workers, making a total of 20! My meditation was centered around the word "Love".

I explained three types of Love.

- The first was "Eros," which is romantic and sexual love.
- Second is "Philia," which is love that is shared with brothers or sisters and friends.
- The third was "Agape Love." In our Christian faith, agape is the highest form of love. Agape love embraces a profound sacrificial love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstances. Agape love seeks the good and well-being of others ... of society ... of the world.

We often quote a scripture from the New Testament that says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only son." GOD GAVE! That is agape love! Love such as that is the way to the heart of God...to the heart of others. God gave and we must adopt that way of loving by giving to others.

Well, the evening had ended, and we were washing dishes and cleaning up. Dave Iden came into the kitchen said, "EPA, that is what you explained tonight." I was thinking what does the EPA have to do with love? I was tired and a little slow so Dave had to explain...Eros....Philia...Agape. Duh! What a great way to remember the message!

Well, now it is December. We are all busy decorating our homes, shopping for family and friends, and going to parties. We are so busy; it is easy to forget about the wars and suffering that is happening between Israel and Palestine or Ukraine and Russia. In the midst of all our holiday preparations, we have forgotten about AGAPE LOVE! What can we do to help the people that are being bombarded by evil every day? Children are dying as we sing, "Deck the Halls." I witnessed pictures of 13 premature babies that are fighting to stay alive because they have no incubators to hold them. God help us!

As we approach Christmas, I am reminded of why we celebrate this season. **GOD GAVE** his only begotten son! **GOD GAVE** us Jesus who grew into a man and taught us many new ways to live our lives. Jesus called twelve men to walk with him and hear the messages from God. They took that message all around their world to call others, like you and me, to be followers also.

The message of Christmas is not only **GOD GAVE** but also **GOD CALLS** to you and me and all who will listen to practice **AGAPE LOVE**. We are called to practice sacrificial love that seeks the good and well-being of others as I defined above. Agape Love is a verb. It is a force and follow through. Love as an action is the only thing that has ever changed the world. Agape love is about spending our lives working to improve the lives of others. What does that mean for you? What sacrifice of love is God calling you to fulfill?

I pray your Christmas will be filled with good times with family and friends. I pray for you and myself that we all remember this year that **GOD GAVE** his only son! I challenge you to listen for **GOD'S CALL** to **AGAPE LOVE**. Will you hear? Will you take action?

I wish you many BLESSINGS, abundant HOPE, and profound PEACE.

*Pastor Connie*

## A NEW WAY OF COMMUNICATING

Beginning January 2024, Sulphur Grove is going to send communications to you a little differently than in the past.

The monthly newsletter will be sent via email to everyone who would usually get it through the postal mail. This means that if you get the newsletter mailed to you, you will now need to check your email rather than the mailbox. If you already receive the newsletter electronically, there is nothing you need to do. This will be the last issue that will be mailed to you.

If we do not have your email on file, it will be crucial that you provide it, otherwise you will miss out on all that is happening within the church. It will also be important to keep us up to date if your email changes.

The same will go for the yearly Easter and Christmas time letters, and any special letter that may have to go out during the year. These will also be emailed out to everyone. Those letters with special offering envelopes included, the envelopes will be made available in the church or offerings can be made online. Stay tuned for further information regarding how to give online.

One of the main reasons for doing this is to keep costs down. With everything becoming more expensive, it is important to be mindful of our spending, including the cost of paper, envelopes, ink for the printers, and wear and tear on the machines.

Again, it will be vital for you to make sure that we have your email address on file.

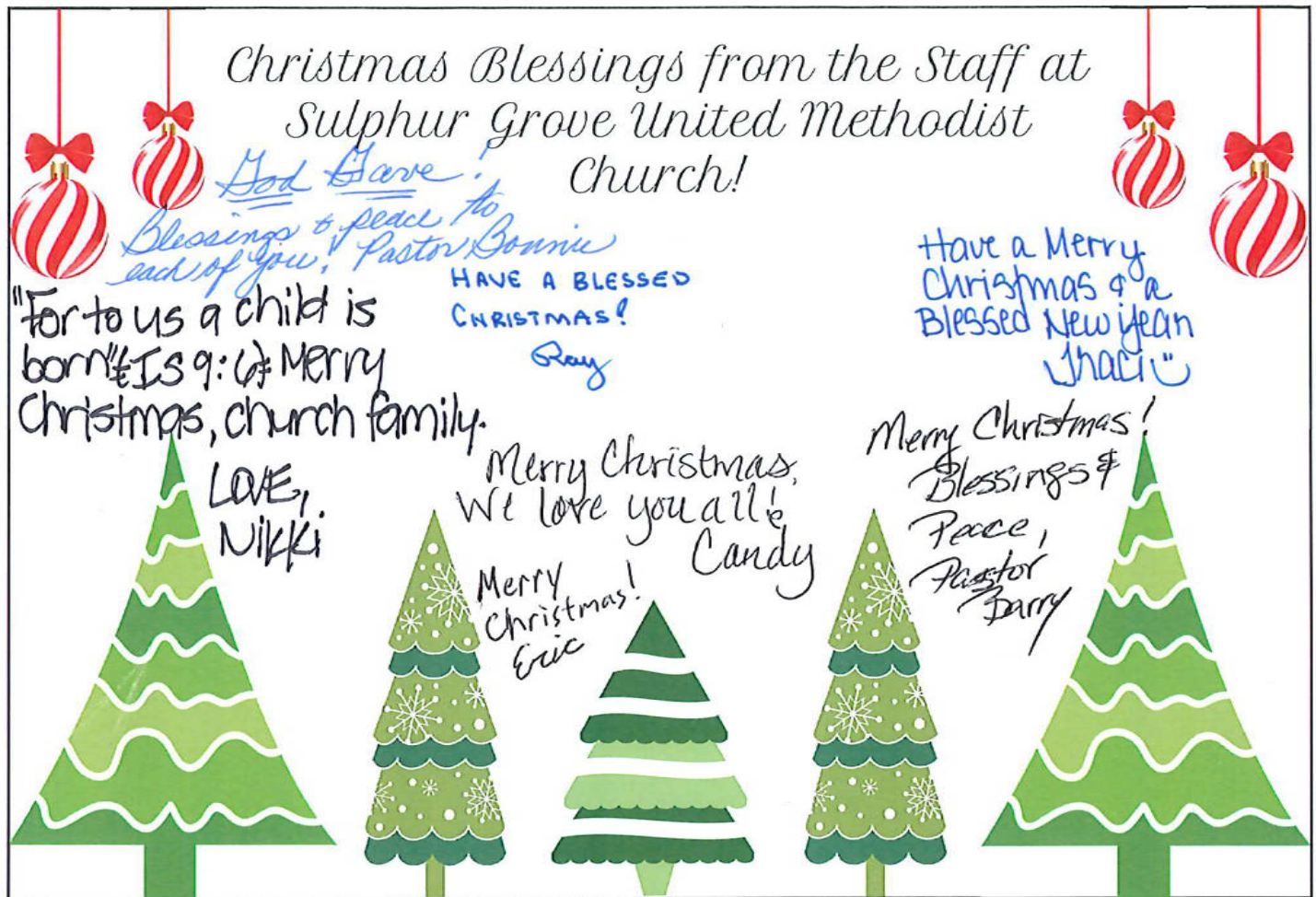
If you get the newsletter mailed to you, but we have your email address on file, you will be switched over to receive it electronically, beginning with the January 2024 newsletter. Anyone in the household with an email address that would like to receive the newsletter and other forms of communication, will need to provide their email address. Couples sharing an email address will, of course, only get one copy.

For those that prefer a hard copy, you can always print a copy from your computer, phone, or tablet. You can also always pick one up on Sundays when you come in for Sunday Service. We will have them available in the Gathering Area on the curved counter and on the Information Table in the Narthex. But only a limited few, so if you get it emailed, please print it from your email and leave those for others who may not have email access.

If you would no longer like to receive the newsletter at all, please let us know and we'll take care of the rest.

This will not affect the weekly bulletins, announcements, and prayer and flower lists. This will only affect pieces that are mailed directly to your homes. This also will not affect the yearly directory.

Thank you for your understanding while we move forward into new ways to communicate with everyone as well as being good stewards and being mindful of rising costs.



## FROM THE OFFICE

- The office will be closed on Monday, December 25th, and Tuesday, December 26th for the Christmas holiday. We will reopen on Wednesday, December 28th at 9am. Everyone in the office wishes you a safe, happy, and joyous Christmas.

## OFFERING ENVELOPES

The 2024 offering envelopes are here! You will be able to pick them up starting Sunday, December 3rd. They will be available in the Gathering Area & in alphabetical order for your convenience. Please, if you see a booklet for someone who may have difficulty making it into the church to pick theirs up, please take it and deliver it to them. They would appreciate it!



## MISSIONS AND OUTREACH

*"We are a 'mission church.'*

*We believe in reaching out to those in need locally, nationally, and globally."*

### ST. PAULS LUNCHEON

On November 7, 2023, we served 157 people lunch at St Paul's United Methodist Church on Huffman Ave. We served chicken & noodles, green beans, French bread, and homemade cupcakes. We also brought water, Gatorade, gum, and fruit drinks. We distributed devotionals and Bibles to everyone that we could. I want to thank Rita Carmen, Shari Coover, Jim Carmen, and Dave Farlee for helping to serve and clean up. Also, I want to thank the ladies who helped me fix all the cupcakes – Darlene Rabe, Sue Wilson, Evvie Moore, Sue Breisch and myself. We could never accomplish this mission without all the help from our two circles.

Blessings,  
Clela (Farlee)

### BLANKET THE WORLD WITH LOVE ~ BE PART OF THE MIRACLE

Church World Service (CWS) Blanket Sunday is December 10. Congregations around the world host blanket offerings to live out a mission to serve God's people near and far. Everyday someone in the world experiences hard times, through CWS's blanket program you can provide blankets for those in their greatest moment of need. When difficulties happen, a single act of kindness can make a difference and be the miracle someone was praying for. You can be part of the miracle of sharing love and hope with neighbors around the world by donating to Blanket Sunday. The gift will help provide love, warmth, and comfort to individuals who need a reminder that someone cares about them.

Please consider making a donation to this worthy cause. If paying by check, make it out to Sulphur Grove UMC with "Blanket" marked on the memo line. Thank you for your generosity.



### BLUE CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICE

A Blue Christmas Service is offered especially for those hurting and struggling during the holidays. Our Blue Christmas service will be offered December 20, the longest night of the year.

We invite you to join us at 7:00 to receive healing and remember those persons who are no longer with you. Some people come because they are mourning the death of a loved one. Some are far from home. Some suffer from illness, addiction, or estrangement. Some are lonely, struggling financially, or in conflict with another. Some hurt because of the great pain, need, and violence in our nation and world. The reasons for coming are many.

We gather amid personal suffering to remember God is good! God is strong! God is nearby! We are never alone, and we have every reason to hold on to hope.

I look forward to this very special time of worship....and to extend my love to you.  
Remember.....December 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary.

Blessings to each of you!  
Pastor Bonnie



## ~~ UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH NEWS ~~

All ladies are invited to attend all meetings and events

- ♦ **CARITAS** will meet at TJ Chumps Wednesday, December 6 at 11am for their Christmas lunch. The Fish item is toothpaste. For more information contact Brenda Stevenson (937) 506-8959 or [brenda.stevenson@ameritech.net](mailto:brenda.stevenson@ameritech.net).
- ♦ **NEW DIMENSIONS** will meet Tuesday, December 5 at 6:30 pm in the Gathering Area for their meeting and Christmas Party. The Fish item is toothpaste. For more information contact Darlene Rabe (937) 307-5489 or [rabedc@aol.com](mailto:rabedc@aol.com).
- ♦ **BOARD MEETING** will meet Thursday, December 14 at 11:45am in Sue Breisch's home.



# December

## Worship SCHEDULE

TAYLORSVILLE

Worship 8:30am &amp; 10:45am

Please keep in mind, if you do not feel comfortable returning to church just yet, online streaming is available.

December 3  
COMMUNION  
*"Faithful: Christmas Through the  
Eyes of Joseph  
A Carpenter Names Joseph"*  
Matthew 13: 54-56

December 10  
*"Faithful: Christmas Through the  
Eyes of Joseph  
Whose Child is This?"*  
Matthew 1: 18-19

December 17  
*"Faithful: Christmas Through the  
Eyes of Joseph  
Raising a Child Not Your Own"*  
Matthew 1-18-21

December 20  
Blue Christmas  
7pm

December 24  
Combined service at 10:45am  
*Faithful: Christmas Through the  
Eyes of Joseph  
The Journey to Bethlehem"*  
Luke 2: 1-5  
  
6:30pm Communion in Chapel  
7:00pm Christmas Eve Cantata  
7:00pm Candlelight Service at the  
Bridge of Hope

December 31  
*Faithful: Christmas Through the  
Eyes of Joseph  
The Rest of the Story"*  
Luke 2: 21-24

## SULPHUR GROVE GIVING OF OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS—YEAR TO DATE AS OF OCTOBER 31, 2023

Total General Fund Giving	\$472,840.00
Transfers to Budget	-\$2,450.00
Total General Fund Income	\$470,390.00
Total General Fund Expenses	\$538,650.20
Loan Balance	\$467,056.33
Payment to Loan Principal	\$1,196,541.74

**On-line giving available on our website at [www.sulphurgrove.org](http://www.sulphurgrove.org).**

Monthly detailed finance reports are available through the church office. Please contact Ray Fosnot at [treasurer@sulphurgrove.org](mailto:treasurer@sulphurgrove.org) or 236-5970 if you would like to receive a report or have questions.

## January 2024

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:**

**Friday, December 8, 2023**

Please submit articles to Traci at [tracis@sulphurgrove.org](mailto:tracis@sulphurgrove.org) or drop off at the church office.

Articles may be subject to editing.

Questions? Please call the church office at 236-5970.

## Sulphur Grove United Methodist Church Ministers

The People of Sulphur Grove United Methodist Church including:

Barry Baughman ..... Lead Pastor  
 Bonnie Loudner ..... Congregational Care Pastor  
 Jerrie Bell-Brion ..... Interim Pastor, Bridge of Hope  
 Eric Munson..... Director of Youth Ministries  
 Candy Buffenbarger..Director of Children's Ministries  
 Samantha Seeberg.....Choir Director  
 James Edwards-Kenion...Handbell Choir Director

Ray Fosnot.....Treasurer  
 Dave Hunt .....Financial Secretary  
 Nikki Smith ..... Administrative Assistant  
 Traci Schaaf ..... Administrative Assistant

**SULPHUR GROVE CHURCH**  
 7505 Taylorsville Road  
 Huber Heights OH 45424  
 (937) 236-5970  
 Worship ~ 8:30am & 10:45am  
 Kiawanda Language Worship  
 4:00pm-6:00pm in Holden Chapel

**Bridge of Hope**  
 6805 US 40  
 Tipp City, OH 45371  
 937-845-8025  
 Worship ~ 11am

**Office Hours:**

Mon - Fri: 9:00am - 1:30pm

[www.sulphurgrove.org](http://www.sulphurgrove.org) [office@sulphurgrove.org](mailto:office@sulphurgrove.org)



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